

apparently unconscious that the gloom of winter had passed away.

The low music of finch and blackbird seemed different from the carols of later spring: it certainly had hope, but it was not yet free from misgiving. A month would pass before the fulfilment of hope, before the nest would be complete and the first round egg be placed therein. Was not this bright, warm weather too good to last; and might not winter return? Might not the cruel hawk descend with lightning speed, and the little home in the fork of holly or hawthorn be unfinished, or left to ruin from wind and rain? Was Nature whispering: "Hush! singing birds, till the marigolds are unfolding by the stream, and the moor-hen carries a sedge in her bill as she swims beneath the arching alders of the bank?"

I had spent many hours beside this trout-reach. Here I had shared the gladsome life of the birds; here I had sought, in quiet communion with Nature, release from perplexity and care. It was a place of memories, that thronged my mind as I looked at the shining river and the peaceful valley and hill-side beyond. The trout would rise no more till the morrow, for the frail ephemerals had vanished from the stream; but I could recall out of the lim past familiar shapes and scenes, and live with them and among them in my solitude.

During my years of absence from my old village, the winter floods had altered the formation of the pool above the reach, and washed away the gravelly banks, and torn the tough alders from the leaf-mould gathered about their twisted roots. But when at first I wandered by the river, the pool was deep from bank to bank, and the favourite haunts of the salmon were close beside the alder-roots where, now, the stream ran shallow over a sandy bed, and, except when the water was clearing after flood or in the spawning season, a salmon could seldom be observed.

Two of the many adventures that gave an abiding interest to those long-gone fishing days were well remembered. I had fished up-river without success all the September day, till the